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## **The North Carolina Museum of History Receives a Burned Cross, a Unique Symbol of Racial Violence**



August 25, 2020 (RALEIGH, N.C.) — Wednesday, August 26, The North Carolina Museum of History received a new artifact, graciously donated by descendants of Judge Samuel Pretlow Winborne (1923–2019). The item is a cross that was once burned in the front yard of Judge Winborne. On loan to the museum at one point in time, the cross has now been gifted by the family and will be permanently housed in the museum.

When asked about the significance of this artifact, Ken Howard, director of the North Carolina Museum of History, responded, “We greatly appreciate the donation by Judge Winborne’s family of this unique symbol of racial hatred from the 1960s. In an effort to learn from history, this addition to the museum will serve as a teaching tool and a reminder of the reality of racism, and the goal of ending it.”

Samuel Pretlow Winborne was born and raised in North Carolina and joined the US Army Air Corps to serve during World War II. After returning home to Chapel Hill, with an Air Medal and a Distinguished Flying Cross, he resumed his studies and practiced law in Raleigh with his brother. He became a prosecutor for Raleigh city court in 1957 and a city court judge in 1960. He was elected to serve as a judge on Wake County District Court in 1969.

The Klan took notice when Winborne presided over the trial of a young white man accused of assaulting an elderly Black man in October 1965. One night, Winborne found a flaming cross, a common sign of

Klan intimidation, on the front yard of his Blount Street home. Rather than retreating from the threat, the judge rebuked Klan members as “bigots,” laughed at the Klan, and invited his neighbors over to roast hot dogs over the dying flames.

Winborne stepped down from the bench after 18 years of service but continued to practice law intermittently for 20 years in Carteret County.

The partially burned cross was handled with respect and met by curators of the Museum of History, as well as museum director Ken Howard and Dr. Kevin Cherry, deputy secretary of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and director of the Office of Archives and History.

#### **IMAGES: [Dropbox link](#)**

Images – Pictured: Mitch Wilds, family to Judge Winborne and artifact donor; Ken Howard, director, North Carolina Museum of History; Dr. Kevin Cherry, deputy secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, and director, Office of Archives and History; and museum staff members Camille Hunt, senior registrar, Collections Section; Earl Ijames, curator, African American History; Bobby Foil, artifact handler, Collections Section

Courtesy of North Carolina Museum of History, images taken by Eric N. Blevins, photographer, North Carolina Museum of History

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**For information about the NC Museum of History**, a Smithsonian Affiliate museum, call 919-814-7000 or access [ncmuseumofhistory.org](http://ncmuseumofhistory.org) or follow the museum on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [YouTube](#).

#### **About the NC Museum of History**

The North Carolina Museum of History, a Smithsonian Affiliate, fosters a passion for North Carolina history. This museum collects and preserves artifacts of state history and educates the public on the history of the state and the nation through exhibits and educational programs. **Admission is free.** Last year, more than 465,000 people visited the museum to see some of the 150,000 artifacts in the museum collection. The Museum of History, within the Division of State History Museums, is part of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

#### **About the Smithsonian Affiliations Network**

Since 2006, the North Carolina Museum of History has been a Smithsonian Affiliate, part of a select group of museums, cultural, educational, and arts organizations that share Smithsonian resources with the nation. The Smithsonian Affiliations network is a national outreach program that develops long-term collaborative partnerships with museums, educational, and cultural organizations to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. More information is available at [affiliations.si.edu](http://affiliations.si.edu).

#### **About the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**

The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) is the state agency with a vision to be the leader in using the state’s natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational, and economic future of North Carolina. NCDNCR’s mission is to improve the quality of life in our state by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries, and natural assets in North Carolina by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state’s history,

conserving the state's natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development.

NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums, and Jennette's Pier, as well as 39 state parks and recreation areas, the North Carolina Zoo, the nation's first state-supported symphonic orchestra, the State Library of North Carolina, the State Archives of North Carolina, the North Carolina Arts Council, the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, and the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, along with the state Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, call 919-814-6800 or visit [DNCR.nc.gov](http://DNCR.nc.gov).

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